

**PREPARED STATEMENT BY
OAKLAND COUNTY TREASURER ANDY MEISNER
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 19, 2017**

- Thank you Chairman Runestad, Minority Vice Chair Greimel and committee members. I'm honored to be here in support of House Bills 4821 and 4822.
- Thank you to the bill sponsors and staff, the Oakland County legislative delegation for answering our call for help, and WXYZ Investigative Reporter Heather Catallo for bringing light to this cruel and deceitful conspiracy.
- Finally, thanks to my staff, and in particular my Chief Tax Administrator Laura Schmitt who was first to detect this scheme, for their attentiveness, integrity, and advocacy on behalf of Oakland County taxpayers.
- Around April of 2016, the Treasurer's Office noticed a notorious real estate broker paying back taxes on properties whose owners were recently deceased.
- Around that same time we heard from taxpayers receiving orders from the same real estate broker to vacate their homes, even though they had an active payment plan with the Treasurer's Office to save the home.
- There were three common denominators in each of these cases:
 1. First, the deeds for each of these properties were in the name of a loved one of the inhabitant who had recently passed.
 2. Second, probate estates were filed for each of these properties based on an alleged claim of interest on the part of said real estate broker.

3. Third, each of the probate estates were requested by the exact same Public Administrator who was only supposed to file a probate estate where there are no heirs.
- Working with our friends in the Clerk's office, the pieces of the conspiracy came together:
 1. The broker researches death and delinquent tax records to find valuable properties,
 2. Broker tips off the Public Administrator about which properties they should file an estate,
 3. PA appoints themselves as the Personal Representative and begins to dispose of assets of the estate,
 4. PA contracts with the broker and web of broker-controlled companies to oversee eviction, assess and maintain the property, and to sell the property, sometimes on an inflated commission.
 - All the while the rightful heirs are either being completely shut out of their property and inheritance, or only receiving a pittance after the conspiracy has exacted its huge price.
 - House Bills 4821 and 4822 take a critical step towards shutting down this and other copycat conspiracies, and shows our strong commitment to the sanctity of property rights in Michigan.
 - With that, I'm happy to take any questions.

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Context for Judy D'Angelo's story:

- When Judy's mother's home was in probate and sold by the Public Administrator/ Personal Representative, the taxable value was just over \$25,000, meaning rough market value could be reasonably assumed to be no less than \$50,000. Again, it was sold by the Public Administrator/ Personal Representative for \$38,000.
- As Judy's mother had lived in the home for many years, the assessed value was much lower than after its sale to the second broker, who turned around and sold it for \$97,000.
- Waterford is a desirable community in the heart of Oakland County that saw an 8.7% increase in property values just this year.
- Proposal A, uncapping, taxable value, SEV - while all things well-known to real estate brokers, are not necessarily common knowledge to family members working to resolve their loved one's affairs in the wake of their death.